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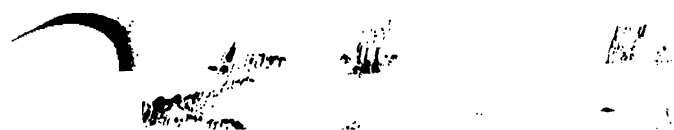
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POEMS.



P O E M S

BY

ANNETTE F. C. KNIGHT.



HENRY S. KING AND Co.

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NOTE.

FIVE of the shorter Poems have appeared in
"Fraser's Magazine;" with these exceptions
none have been printed before.



THE GARDEN OF POESY.



LOSED is the garden gate ;

I know how bounteously the sunshine
streams

Within, for now and then I see some gleams

Steal through a little gap or chink ;

The gate will open soon, I think,

So I, contented, wait.

I know what dwelleth there,

I know what joy of joys, what pain of pains

Thrill those who walk there, and my eyesight



strains

To see the sunshine struggling through,
Nourish'd by other sun and dew
Than warm and freshen here.

For I have crept inside
Full many a time, and in those golden groves
Have heard quaint singing of the ancient loves
Of poets of a southern clime,
Wound with the music of our time,
All songs from far and wide.

They sang 'midst joy and tears,
And show'd me all the splendours of the
place,
With wonders I, perchance, might fail to trace—
The golden fruit upon the trees,
The secrets told by birds and bees
Only to poets' ears.

Once the gate open'd wide,
I boldly enter'd, and saw no one there ;
I wander'd up and down those alleys fair,
I tasted of the golden fruit,
I play'd new tunes upon my lute,
What joy did me betide !

If I ne'er find again
That gate unclosed, nor ever wander so
Within that garden, singing as I go,
That dream will glorify my days,
I still shall sing that garden's praise,
Nor shall I wait in vain !





REST AND UNREST.



CASEMENT window, a holly-tree,

And a little bird who sings to me,

A little bird whose breast will glow

When earth is cover'd with frost and snow,

And the deep red roses are all laid low.

A swift-brown stream, with a varied edge

Of alder bushes, willow and sedge,

A restless bird who skims along,

With a harsh, shrill cry, which is not a song,

But a hasty utterance of something wrong.

“ Oh ! bird in the holly-tree, sing ! sing out !

Oh ! let me know what thy song is about !

It sounds so chasten'd, and yet so glad ;

But the swallow's harsh cry will drive me mad,

For it comes from a depth which is bitter-sad.”

Sang Robin, “ Although the dear leaves fall fast,

There are songs to be sung when Autumn is past,

Of the deep red sunsets in wintry days,

Of the swift stream warm in the ruddy rays,

Of silvery frost work I sing the praise.”

But the Swallow cried out, “ I will not rest

Until I have drunk of the very best ;

The winds only rise for a broken fall,

Waves clamber, and rush, and crave, and call,

I do but echo the longings of all !

" I will strive and cry with wings and breath,
For how can I bear to see Nature's death ?

I go to a land where all is complete,
Where the song the waves sing is perfectly
sweet,

In unbroken cadence they fall at one's feet."

The little bird turn'd on the holly-tree,

Look'd in at my window, and sang to me ;

" Hold on ! sing on ! through the wintry blast,
Our songs are all broken, our longings too vast,
But listen ! they promise Perfection at last !"





A CHARACTER.



CHANGELESS, but not of one dull
monotone,
Ever the same, yet thou dost ever
change,
Not harsh or strange
Thy modulations, he can well arrange
Who holds possession of their opening key,
And turns it readily,
He truly readeth thee, and he alone.

Like a broad landscape is thy noble mind,
Whose features are the same by night and day;
Shadows may stray

Across its breadth, or gleams of sunshine play,
First here, then there, till he who watches
seems

In a fair land of dreams,
Yet the grand outlines still remain defined.

Or like to some great work of music's art,
Whose leading thoughts pre-eminence sustain,
And all in vain :
Rich, varying harmonies the soul enchain,
Now subtly soft, now sharply clear and pure,
Still the main thoughts endure,
Returning homewards whence they made their
start.

So, in thy moods, through every seeming change
Flows a sustain'd and perfect melody
Whether it be

Joyful and bright, or moving solemnly,
There is a unity which reigns complete,
Calm, restful, perfect, sweet,
And all is as it must be,—nothing strange.





PAST AND PRESENT.



T was an autumn morning, the white
dew

Lay clustering on every blade and
leaf:

A day which soon would ripen, till the noon
Fell scorching on the sportsman, who had sought
The moors, now glowing in their regal robes
Of richest gold and purple.

On this day
Two friends were treading on the rugged paths,
Now dipping deep below the heathery tufts ;
Now through the noble-spreading bracken ; then

Emerging on a soft, fresh bed of turf;
Then clambering down the sides of the high moor,
Came where the nut-trees thick and thicker grew.
Unto the wild stream's margin.

O'er the stones,
Thrown down as if in sport by giant hands,
The two friends leaping, came on such a place
As dwells for ever in our tenderest thoughts,
When once our eyes have known it. Such a pool
With green reflections, where a rare wych-elm
Stretch'd its weird arms, until its finger-tips
Dipp'd in the water: such a hidden spot.
The friends said, smiling, "This must surely be
Diana's choicest bath, so fenced around,
And shelter'd from intruders."

There they sat
And talk'd of all things,—things above, beneath,
Within us, and around. They had not talk'd

In such sweet fashion since their college days ;
For Reginald was out in the great world,
Fighting his way with eager, restless toil,
Full of the Present, "The great modern times,
Greater than all the days which went before."
So spake he, while his friend beside him
smiled,

A smile of sweetness full, but with a touch
Of kindly sarcasm. For that Geoffry loved
Far other things than those which Reginald
Took his delight in.

Geoffry loved the ways
Of country life ; fishing in lonely streams,
Or with his gun over September moors
Roaming the livelong day—for through it all
He felt the hidden meaning of the scene,
The awful quietude of those great moors ;
Or, as he wander'd up a river's bed,

He dream'd such dreams as fit a follower
Of quaint old Izaak—

Such the two who sat
Beside the singing stream, and Reginald
Pour'd forth his eloquence, until it seem'd
The stream must needs be hinder'd on its way ;
For this was such a nook of Nature's own
As seldom echo'd man's poor babbling flood.
“Of these great modern times,” quoth Reginald,
“I needs must sing the praises. When had man
Such insight into Beauty, and such power
For finding out her secrets ? In old times
If men weaved tones, or words, or twisted lines
Into fair forms, they did so childishly,
Not knowing what they did.

But now we take
The kernel out of every secret thing.

We find the meanings in the words and tones
Of these old treasures, and shall know some day
Exactly why they please us—Or perchance
Why some set tone, or special interval
Should vibrate to a little ‘ molecule ’
Which makes our brain to act in some set way ;
Or why a line drawn thus should be to us
More pleasing than if drawn another way,
In short, we have the keys to all the Arts ! ”

He ceased, and look’d at Geoffry, for the smile
Upon his lips had such a look with it
As made him laugh perforce, and hold his peace—

Said Geoffry, “ So, my friend, you come to me,
A mouldy rustic, take away my breath,
In showing what would be the consequence
Of rubbing off one’s rust in the great world !



Oh ! mighty consequence. If one became
A thorough modern in one's ways and thoughts
One might look down upon the childish Past !
One has the keys of all the sacred Arts !
One can go in and out, and handle them
With no more reverence than one takes the key
To enter one's own dwelling !—

Patience, friend !

What if the Art be greater than its key ?
What if the feeling greater than to know
What 'molecules' have caused it ? Can you get
Behind your theory of 'molecules ?'
Say, have you found the birthplace of the Arts ?
But no ! their infancy lies hidden deep
In the fair morning, when the mists lay thick
Upon the mountains ! ”

Then spake Reginald,

“ It seems to me the crown of all delight

When modern science comes to justify
What Art had work'd upon unconsciously."
Then Geoffry, "Oft a father, full of care,
Whose thoughts are eddying in a whirl of life,
Looks on his children, at their comic plays
Enacting full-grown men, but with such talk
Of quaint and innocent humour, that it seems
Like a sweet sarcasm upon human life;
The children all unconscious of the cause
Which moves the full-grown man to longing tears.
E'en so the best of us in these late days
Look in our gravest moods with sadness back
To the World's childhood, when unconsciously
Men made things beautiful.

Though there were times,
Which, having lost that first unconscious grace,
Sought not, and loved not Beauty, now again
Amid the hurry of these latter days

Our longing eyes strain backward to the Past,
We crave to learn the secret power which gave
Beauty, not only to the stately halls,
And holy places founded by our sires,
But e'en to all they touch'd ; a skill we miss ;
And 'mid our efforts see that effortless
And artless grace is worth all we can reach
With all our searchings to the hearts of things !
Look at the path we came by o'er the moors
All-careless wandering like a mountain stream,
Which cares not for the worth of time and space.
Its lines are beautiful as Nature's own,
The feet of men first made it, men who walk'd
Not as if walking meant but this one thing—
To reach the end you seek in shortest time.
Then took they stones from out the wild stream's
bed,
With marks of ages writ upon their front,

And placed them all unhewn, nor set about
To work their will with Nature, and to smooth
Her fair irregularities beneath.

Now all our roads are straight and smooth as
say—

‘I take the shortest way to reach the end,
Nor care if I look graceful as I go!’”

They paused, for now had come the hour of noon:
The sunshine, streaming downwards through the
leaves,

Play’d on the waters. Geoffrey gently said,
“Wherefore dispute? The dawn must flush the
day;

The noon must mellow to the silent eve,
And each age has its beauty, though methinks
Unconscious loveliness is best of all!
Here are two songs I made, one of the Past,

The other of the Present ; you shall say
If I have done each justice ; listen then—

I met her on the sunny hills
About the break of day ;
The dew-drops on the gossamer
In sparkling beauty lay ;
All clad in faery green and gold
She took her lightsome way.

She touch'd me as I stood and gazed,
Lost in a glad surprise ;
I knew not what her name was then,
But had a faint surmise
It was the Spirit of the Past,
Who struck my wondering eyes.

All careless floating was her dress,
All free from thought her mien,

And yet was all so full of grace
That nowhere could have been
The air and garb of simpleness
More fitting to be seen.

She tripp'd along forgotten paths
Whose tracks she seem'd to know,
As knows a rippling mountain stream
The course in which to flow ;
I look'd and listen'd as she went :
With singing did she go.

All seem'd more lovely where she trod,
And yet she look'd to me
A simple child in all her ways,
Who, though so full of glee,
Knew nothing wherefore she was glad—
'Twas just that it must be.

But I have met her elsewhere,
Not only 'mid the heather,
Where I could sit and sing my song,
Forgetting wintry weather :
But in the town at Christmas-tide
We met and walk'd together.

Whene'er I meet her then it seems
I quaff a draught of life ;
My poor dull brain grows bright and keen
With quaint, sweet fancies rife,
Forgot the wealth and weary thoughts
Of modern, daily strife.

And then I hear old Shakespeare sing
An easy lyric strain,
As in his lighter moods he sang ;
Or then a vocal train,

Ben Jonson rare, and many more
Meet and sing forth again.

Alas ! 'tis only now and then
We join their heartfelt song ;
Our eyes are blinded as we walk
Earth's loveliness among,
Unconscious simpleness hath fled
And been forgotten long !

Said Geoffry, " If my praise of olden time
Doth not displease you, Reginald, you shall see
If I can take your side with justice too,
And find some beauty in our modern days."

I met her in a busy street,
In sunny broad mid-day,

And signs of wealth magnificent
All round about her lay;
With conscious, stately tread she came
Along the dusty way.

She glanced upon me with a look
So full of conscious care,
It hid the beauty of her face
Which had been very fair;
The Spirit of the Present time
Had lost her childlike air.

Her raiment fell in richest folds,
And yet all seem'd to be
Array'd with studied carefulness;
No sweet simplicity
Had left a curl to float at will
Or lie all carelessly.

She walk'd along with purpose plain,

As if on business bent,

No nod nor smile to man or maid

From her for nothing went ;

But every little grace of life

Seem'd full of deep intent.

She listen'd to the poet's song

And gave her calm applause ;

She went to many a public place,

She smiled on many a cause,

She praised, and blamed, and did good deeds

As if by certain laws.

And yet, amid her busy life,

Her eyes look'd sadly back

To times of great creative power,

Which her late days did lack ;

Where simple grace had walk'd before
She strove to find the track.

Alas ! she could not, that was why
Her face oft look'd so sad,
She could not emulate the grace
Her elder sister had ;
She could not in her brighter hours
Be simply gay and glad.

Yet now and then in sweet old songs
She can forget herself,
When her eye rests on quaint old books
Which stand upon her shelf,
Writ long ago, in days removed
From modern pride and pelf.

And now and then there comes to her
A thought which is her own,

And makes her kin with grand old times,
Nor walking here alone,
And just repeating ancient songs
Chimed in a modern tone.

And sometimes, too, there comes to her
A message grave and mild,
Which tells her how her longings may
By good deeds be beguiled ;
And she may learn the secret how
To be once more a child.

“ Well ! I must be content,” quoth Reginald,
“ Nor blame your scanty justice, nor still more
Your sarcasms, for the close makes some amends,
And I could do no better—Let us go !”

And then they, silent, took their way again
Up the steep paths, and o'er the dark'ning moors.

Said Geoffry, "Nought can change these grand
old moors,

While time itself doth last. You modern men
Can never cultivate their charms away.

But hark! the charm is broken by that sound

Of very modern life. Prithee step out,

Or we shall never catch the latest train

But have to wander on the moors till dawn!"





I WONDER WHY!



WONDER why when wild winds cry,

And rain drips from the eaves,

And before the rising tempest fly

The last few fluttering leaves,

There bursts a tune of merry June

Upon my inner ear,

Warm odours pass through the rich deep grass,

And the blackbird whistles clear,—

I wonder why!

I wonder why when night-winds sigh,

And the city rests in shade,

And its living souls in slumber lie,
And glare and tumult fade ;
Far from the town, on a clover'd down,
On short, fine grass I tread,
'Mid gorse and grey-stone, I wander alone,
And larks carol overhead,—
I wonder why !

Do I wonder why when you and I
Are parted by many a mile,
And between us tireless streams go by,
Woods whisper, and pastures smile ;
In whatever way, by night or day,
You come to eye or ear,
You are no surprise to my gladden'd eyes,
And the words of your song ring clear,
Do I wonder why ?



AUTUMN SONG.

AGAIN?



SWEET and fair ! O rich and rare !

That day so long ago,

The autumn sunshine everywhere,

The heather all aglow,

The ferns were clad in cloth of gold,

The waves sang on the shore ;

Such suns will shine, such waves will sing

For ever evermore !

O fit and few ! O tried and true !

The friends who met that day ;

Each one the other's spirit knew,
And so in earnest play
The hours flew fast, until at last
The twilight kiss'd the shore,
We said, "Such days shall come again
For ever evermore!"

One day again no cloud of pain
A shadow o'er us cast,
And yet we sought in vain—in vain!
To conjure up the past;
Like—but unlike the sun that shone,
The waves that beat the shore,
The words we said, the songs we sang,
Like—unlike evermore!

For ghosts unseen crept in between:
And when our songs flow'd free,

Sang discords in an undertone,
And marr'd the harmony ;
"The Past is ours, not yours," they said,
"The waves that beat the shore,
Though like the same are not the same,
O never nevermore !"





DAILY BREAD.



ONE day, 'twas scarce a year ago,
We wander'd down this winding
lane ;

Now silent walking—now again
Our surface thoughts would gently flow,
And as we walked together thus
A common day it seemed to us.

But now I fancy it was fair
With beauty which has fled away ;
Say, is such beauty born each day

To vanish into empty air ?
So each day's plenitude of grace
We know not till she hides her face ?

For here we are once more—we twain,
Upon another Autumn day ;
Here lies, as then it lightly lay,
The faery gossamer again,
The fields half-ploughed, the berries red,
The quiet over all things spread.

I dimly see its beauty now,
And yet my heart doth say to me—
“Wait but awhile, and you shall see
The glory pass'd will gleam and glow ;
O take the beauty which is spread
Still day by day for daily bread !”

For "daily bread," ah ! this is why
Our present joys should seem the best ;
O grasp them with the keener zest
Because thou canst not lay them by,
And know the manna shall be shed
Fresh joys each day for "daily bread !"





OUR SAD SONGS ARE OUR OWN.



AY ! tell me not that Nature sings
A sad and weary song ;
She tells of many pleasant things,
I will not do her wrong.
The lark, although he never flies
High as his longings' soar,
Sings songs which rise above the skies
Of hope for evermore !
'Tis man alone who maketh moan,
Our sad songs are our own !

Nor sad is that still autumn day

When rooks sail slowly by,

And robins chaunt on leafless spray

Through mists of silver-grey.

When Patience speaks so plain a word

Hope must be ling'ring nigh,

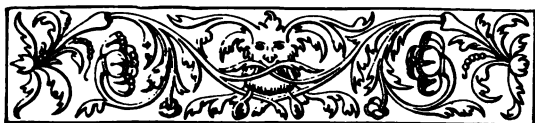
I will not wrong dear Nature's song,

Nor think I hear her sigh.

'Tis man alone who maketh moan,

Our sad songs are our own !





SYMPATHIES OF ART.



HE rustling of the fresh, young rose-
tree leaves,

Where clematis and roses climb, and
twine

Around the thick stone mullions, and the eaves

Which hold out offers of a safe retreat

For swallows and for martins ; and above

The starlings chattering on the chimney-top

Roused Cecil from his slumbers late, and light.

How clear, and sweet the distant, tender blue

Where the glad sun had risen above the moors,

Whose purple-brown melting to solemn grey,
Then modulating over wood and field,
At last resolved itself in sharp, green tones
On quickset hedges, and all opening buds.

As Cecil look'd he drank a draught of joy
While through him thrill'd the wond'rous har-
monies
Of this great symphony of life and love,
"Oh let me hear it once before I die,"
He said, aloud, "let these fair sights be wrought
Into a glad, sweet spring-tide mystery
Of music's magic skill! Let them be wound
And twined, and then unroll'd again to start
On a fresh journey of developments,
New and yet old, familiar, and yet strange:
New as the crozier-shaped young bracken-fronds,
And yet as old as that bright sun which rose

On the great morning which stands out alone,
The earliest Easter-day."

Cecil would speak

To eyes, and thus to hearts who could be reach'd
By truth and beauty ; but the passionate life,
Breathing in all he touch'd, appealed to few ;
The many heeded not. Some spoke indeed
With condescension of his " transcripts fair
From Nature's book," but this was not " high art,"
Only an English landscape ! A few trees
Holding out strenuous arms against the sky,
Where solemn clouds lay stretch'd o'er twilight
green.

Anon an English forest, golden oaks
In sturdy strength above, and delicate ferns
Spreading out tiny hands in low, moist shades.
Some wayside poppies on a sandy bank
Growing where God had put them, bright and
strong

As flowers will look when growing in the home
For which they live, and which exists for them.
Said Cecil, " Could I teach these poor, blind souls
That pure, true Nature speaks low words to them
Of love, and beauty, hope, and patience too ;
I could lead thinkers into such a maze
And labyrinth of subtle questioning,
As few can boast that their ' high art ' can do !
Ever? shall it be ever thus, so few
Whose eyes can see, and hearts can understand
The great Book lying open, though we turn,
And crumple up its leaves, and oft deface
Its fairest pages with our dunces' thumbs,
And feel no pity at the wrong, nor think
Perchance some words are blotted out for aye,
Never to be rewritten for such fools ? "

Such were full oft his thoughts, but when it
chanced

That some heart, tuned to his rare, earnest key
Beat near his own, then the bright sparks would
fall

From the hot anvil of his inner life
Quick as a thunder-shower in summer time.
Oh ! rare and happy times.

Though he had grown
In shelter'd ease, 'midst culture, gentle life,
And gentle manners, yet he walk'd alone,
And lonely bore the needful, blessed weight
Of vivid thoughts, and dreams which led him on
Where'er they listed, whether sad or fair,
Gorgeous or terrible,—an artist's lot.

But he must live, and strive, and die, and pass,
Leaving behind no impress save on few.
Some yet there are indeed who gently speak
One to another in their quiet hours,

With lower'd breath, and soft eyes ripe for tears,
Of "all he would have done if he had lived !"
So may the chosen friends of Keats perchance
Have spoken, though more proof he left behind
Of what he was, and would be in his noon.

But above all, there yet lives one who knows
His soul more truly than all earth besides,
A kindred artist ; one who painted not
In colours stolen from the rainbow's stores,
But in th' exhaustless tones of heaven and earth ;
Of fir-trees moaning ; of the dry, ripe grass
Swept by a western wind ; the mocking laugh
Of owls in lonely woods ; of blackbird's song
Poured to the sunset from a cherry tree ;
Of grasshoppers that chirrup in the fields ;
Of guillemots that chaunt drear sentences
To the fit orchestra of winds and waves.

Sometimes new forms would flow from Edna's
hands ;

But oftener old angel-music, caught,
And prisoned by some mighty master-hand,
Would wake and speak through her clear rendering

All that it said to him long past away.
O wond'rous Art, not only finding words
For the unwritten language of the heart,
But sheltering intellectual truths behind
Its diverse utterances.

Complexity,
Like Nature's, is its attribute, and yet
Its details may, like Nature's, be resolved
Into the simplest elements ; and though
There is no limit to its varying forms,
Through all there reigns most fix'd and perfect law.

Heavenly and evanescent, far above
All things of time, and sense, and earthly mould,
Is music, yet so speedily evoked
And brought to earth by him who is a seer,
Born, and not made.

O those were happy times
For Cecil, though as yet no word he spake
To her, and she unwittingly played on,
Nor knew that one was reading all her soul,
And offering her his own.

Ofttimes the tones
Came back to him in colour and in form ;
And she has seen her tenderest melodies
In lines of lovely grace, or it may be
Her gorgeous harmonies roll fold on fold
Up the steep mazes of an autumn wood,
Or spread a spring-tide meadow from his
hand—

Yet long was each by each unrecognized—
And as she played some sweet and wordless
song,

Perchance there came to him these thoughts, and
then

The colour and the form they signified.

A merry blackbird on a cherry bough
Against a pure blue sky, which led your gaze
Deeper and ever deeper, while the sounds
Of human country life, and farm-yard birds
Spoke words of every day: the blackbird sang
For singing's sake, for "gladness and for joy."
And if those wordless songs of hers could take
For him the shape of this world's visible things,
And so be stamped by Cecil's hand to live
For ever as he saw them, surely too
May human words pourtray them, even thus:—

I.

O blackbird, sing for me !

The sweets of spring have choked my voice,

And yet my heart cries out, " Rejoice ! "

The blossoms clustering 'mid the leaves,

Green blades which grow to autumn sheaves,

All sing and shine,

No voice but mine

Lacks melody !

In some cathedral's shade

I oft have felt too weak to sing

The thoughts my heart were burdening ;

Then with the choristers' glad lays

Rose my, else silent, spirit's praise :

Their voice was mine,

That song divine

Sweet music made !

II.

Not so long as a blackbird's song

Was thy dear song to me,

And yet it was—it is so long,

It follows me all day among

The hills and dales,

And streams and gales

Repeat its melody.

No sounds so sweet! No tones so fleet

As of thy song to me!

Yet it gives wings to my slow feet,

It sets to music all I meet,

Or smooth or rough,

'Tis fair enough;

I hear that melody!

Again, a melody of mild regret,

Passionate longings stretching hungry hands,

And grasping nothing ; piteous, piercing moans
Thrown on a sea of fierce ungovern'd pain.

Sweet soul ! sweet soul ! speak once again,
For thou art being borne a-main,
Where I shall call to thee soon in vain !

Open thy lips, and smile before
Thou reachest for aye that distant shore,
Where thy sun-lit smile I can see no more !

Yet again, one word which I may keep,
Laid with precious balms in chambers deep,
And know it is safe there awake or asleep !

My passionate love cannot bid thee stay,
Though I clasp thy hands, though I groan, though
I pray,
I am held in life, though thou art away !

And then, anon, a gentler, safer mood ;
Though full of sadness, yet a quiet grief
Yielding, but slowly, to a holy peace,
And willing patience walking on in hope.

I am as much alone—alone—
As when that first November morn
I gazed upon a world forlorn,
From out the windows of my soul,
And heard the church-bells toll.

I am as much alone—alone—
As when on that November day
I knelt, but found no words to say,
No need for her my heart-wrung cries,
A Saint in Paradise !

I am as much alone—alone—
As when she went,—and I bereft,

Saw the door close,—and I was left ;
A barren life spread out before,
Distant the heavenly shore !

I am alone—but not alone—
For she is evermore my own,
Her life into my life hath grown,
No chill nor change, from near or far
Comes, our sweet love to mar.

The loss is aye the same, and yet
I bravely walk life's rugged way,
And sometimes I am glad and gay ;
The years which part us vanish fast,
Who knows ! is this the last ?

Sometimes a full sweet melody would float
Like a brave ship, swift over liquid hills,

Safe into harbour with unbroken course.

Then strange, fierce chords rose troubling, till the
heart

Pray'd for a simple strain, whereon to rest

The thoughts oppress'd by vastness and by fear.

Come away—away—

I cannot stay ;

'Tis all too terrible,—too vast,—

The rolling sea, with mighty sway,

And the round earth turning fast ;

I seem to feel it on its way

Through endless space,—I cannot stay.

Come away—away,—

I cannot stay,

The solid earth seems eddying fast ;

From great waves rolling up the bay

My scared eyes turn aghast.

O turn thee down the woodland way
To quiet shades,—I cannot stay.

Come near,—ah ! near,
I shall not fear,
I clasp thy hand, and am at rest ;
The earth stands fast, for thou art near,
I am no more oppress'd,
For thou art here, my love ! my dear !
And all is firm ! Come near !

And then sometimes a light quick fantasy
Would bear your dancing heart upon its wings,
Till suddenly some chords of thrilling pain
Would break the charm, and wake a questioning:
Some heavy thoughts of all the sin and woe
So rife in this poor world :—Until anon

A sweet low melody of every day
Would reconcile all dissonance and pain,
And the strange contrast wake a stranger smile,
Half satire and half joy, yet passing sweet.

I.

My little one sat dreaming
Upon a summer day,
The fading flowers of the apple tree
Sprinkled her garments gay,
And the wind just lightly raised her hair,
Then went upon its way.

My little one ne'er heard me,
Although I sang a song,
Although the path was in her sight
On which I walked along;
Until I said, "Sweet dreamer!
Say, is there something wrong?"

My little one spoke sadly,—
“ My dreams were very fair ;
Some secret seem'd quite close to me,
Borne on the summer air,
But human words have scatter'd it,
And brought back human care !”

II.

Great thoughts had come to us, my friend,
Upon that April day,
When on the thymy turf we paced,
With all the world to say,
How heavily press'd this life of ours,
Through all its sunshine and its showers !
We had not heard the little bird,
Who, sitting on a spray,
Still sings, and sings of pleasant things
Which happen day by day.

The twisted thorns with new, green buds,
Fresh sparkling in the light,
And all the unbounded wealth of spring
Were hidden from our sight,
Man's destiny,—so strange—so vast,
All present joy had overcast.
We had not heard the little bird,
Who, sitting on a spray,
Still sings, and sings of pleasant things
Which happen day by day.

From thoughts in perfect sympathy
Our words came fast and hot,
But something pierced our heavy mood,
And chain'd us to the spot;
We smiled,—but neither you nor I
Needed to ask the other why,

For we had heard the little bird,
Who, sitting on a spray,
For ever sings of pleasant things
Which happen day by day !

Such joys there are to those who read the signs
Written in colours and in tones ; all mysteries
Bound up with every passing day and hour.
Not sad for them the weary couch of pain,
If visited by swelling thoughts which tell
Of never-ending marvellous harmonies ;
Of sweet, sad thoughts shut in the dewy cup
Of every mountain harebell. Of new joys
Born at each morrow-morn, which cannot fail,
From youth e'en to old age. Of kindling lights
That make anew what has become most tame,
Familiar as the house where we have lived
From year to year. And shocks of glad surprise

In converse with close friends, when we have
struck

New pathways through most well-known fields of
thought.

A sudden light thrown on an unknown depth

By a swift turn of words, or e'en a smile,

Or some stray gleam on a familiar face.

Weird sounds at dead of night, bringing more near

The world of spirits always barely hid

By a thin veil of sense. Convictions strong

That what seems "out of reason" to the world

May be more near and true than things of sense.

In truth an artist "walks by faith," not sight,

And all his aim is ever to make plain

His great ideal in its majesty

To eyes and ears of others.

Cecil lived

A brief life counted by earth's calendar,
Yet long and full, and leaving much behind—
A precious legacy. Year by year he fail'd,
And each new springtide, bringing life and health,
In him found some new token of decay,
Some sign that his frail mortal part drew nigh
To a long winter in the silent grave.

The years had brought their changes, and he
dwelt
Often alone in that old house, once full
Of life; and crept about the empty rooms,
And slowly paced the broad, straight garden paths:
He saw the landscape change from winter's guise
Of lifeless brown, and gather first a hint
Of delicate grey,—growing to purple,—then
Opening to full, rich harmonies of green.
He saw the periwinkle's mist-blue flowers

Climb up the sun-dial's ancient pedestal ;
He mark'd the budding of the apple-trees,
And saw the roses' gently swelling wealth,
Until they spread their perfumed petals wide,
Scattering fragrance.

It was in the month
Most like to early youth, when it has reach'd
Its full perfection, that the contrast seem'd
More sad and mark'd between that joy and
strength,
On every hand, and Cecil's quick decline.
He knew it well, and watch'd its sure approach,
E'en as he lately mark'd the harbingers
Of still recurring spring. He calmly felt
The close of his young life as natural
As all which comes to pass from year to year.

And now there gather'd round him, one by one,

All he loved best, and as he welcomed them
A quiet smile lit up his eyes and face,
Mocking the light of health.

And once again,
An afternoon in luscious midsummer,
Beneath the trees he sat once more with her,
That sister artist, and unveil'd his life;
Told how in childhood Nature seem'd to him
A mystery apart from common life;
How as the years went on, increasingly
He craved that all his life should be one web
Woven of beauty. Yet it seem'd some creeds
Rejected beauty, or just recognised
That God's works must be honour'd and admired;
Beauty was not an article of faith,
Beauty was somewhat added, while faith turn'd
And closed her eyes on this world, calling it
A place whereon to rest your foot and spring

From hence to higher bliss ; but fit for man
In his most wretched state of sin and woe.
Has man concern with present loveliness ?
Man all polluted ;—man aye shadow'd o'er
By the ever-yawning grave, which only waits
To hide his poor frail body. How can man
Spend life in quest of beauty, when abroad
Is sin and misery enough to quench
All joy, all sense of beauty, all desire
For aught but toiling for a little good !

“ But still to me,” said Cecil, “ did there seem
A discord I could never harmonize,
Nor fuse into my chords, else plain and clear ;
So plain and clear, and yet so poor and thin,
So wanting subtlety,—so inadequate
To make me happy !

But there came a time

When I could grasp with all my being's power
Love, truth, and beauty. When I clearly saw
That sin has done us a most cruel ill
By shutting us from beauty. Ay! no less
Than by disfiguring fair truth and love!
And the old earth still stands so pure, so fair,
We sometimes scarce can wish for perfectness,
So sweet is imperfection!

Had God meant
That man should journey groaning all his days,
He would have marr'd the beauty of the world
More thoroughly, and show'd us without doubt
That toil and sorrow, woe and weariness,
Were all our portion here. It is not so!
He has seen fit to make me one of those
Who preach to human souls in words of light
From the great text of beauty, and thereby
To aid the blessed work of healing men!

And seeing this, henceforth I set my life
To such unending music, that I find
No contradictions in my deepest faith.
That "God is love" pervades all mysteries,
That God is love can make my soul rejoice
E'en through the sin and death that are around !
For I have learnt to hold no selfish creed ;
I hold it for my human brotherhood ;
I know the remedy which God has given
Is full and perfect, and can rectify
All forms of evil in this present world :
And is not this enough ? "

" Yes," Edna said,

" It needs must be enough when in the light
Of such a faith, I see you standing here
Waiting the opening of that unseen world
Of which we know so little ! And enough

To make you willing to give gladly up
The visible beauty of the world we know !
But I ! I only catch a glimpse sometimes
Of the solutions of earth's secrets sad,
And so I pour my heart's blood out in tones
Of wailing sorrow, and harsh dissonance,
Speaking of woes which have no earthly end
In chords which cease, and leave the quivering
heart
Craving their resolution !

Oh ! my friend,
Who will point out to me when you are gone
An exit from these mazes ? ”

But he said,
“ Look steadily round you ! There will open
paths,
If rough, yet not misleading. Do you guess
How your rare tones have brought me messages

My soul had need of ? And that little world
Which has been taught by my best utterances
Was taught by you ? O marvellous sympathy,
Come for my solace, but known nigh too late !
Let us rejoice in such a blessed day,
Although the shadows creep, the twilight grows !”
“Break not my heart,” she said, “Oh ! say no
more !

I cannot bear the sweetness, or the pain,
The joy most painful, or the pain most sweet !
Say not you leave me, leave me all alone,
For since you spoke those words, it seems to me
I needs am all alone when you are gone !”

O who can tell the joy and sorrow met
In that brief hour which follow'd. As the sun,
Which first had kiss'd their feet, now touch'd
their hands,

Clasping each other, and then held them fast
In golden bands of never-ending love.
He walk'd with feeble steps to that low room
With mullion'd windows, where the clematis
Wove a thick curtain of a tender green;
And there he lay, and listen'd dreamily,
While she pour'd forth such soul-subduing strains
As ne'er had ask'd her utterance before.
They spoke of never-ending blessedness
Beyond the touch of time, or change, or death.
The pain was there, but gave a subtlety
And sharpen'd sweetness to her loveliest thoughts.
And one who listen'd might have thought, "Per-
chance

More joy is here than in perfection, since
'Tis imperfection shows us perfectness."
And one did listen, and his full heart long'd
That those two kindred souls might pass away

Into the unknown land, and never part !

Ah ! seldom is such bliss for human love,

So seldom that we often marvel why

The shadow of the approaching, sure farewell

Does not shut out all power of present joy !

*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*

The dark hour fell and hid him from her sight,

And through the grave and gate of Death he
pass'd ;

And she, too, through the bitterness of Death

Rose to another life.

For there had come

To her such deepening of life's common things,

Such power of living where the things of sense

Touch'd her but lightly, that henceforth her life

Had nothing in it trivial, nothing mean.

And of the many who since then have sat

Breathless, and wondering at her marvellous gift
As she poured forth her inmost soul to him,
Sad souls have question'd why her music thrill'd
And melted them with pathos, light, and strength,
Speaking to them as never music spake ;
There is a reason, but how few know why !.





EVERLASTING NOW.



EVERLASTING Now,

How beautiful art thou !

Through the ferny greenwood dells,

When the oaks were golden,

Hyacinths rang their bonny bells,

A tune of music olden ;

Sorrow and care had swept away

That melody so light and gay ;

Why did it wake again that day ?

I do not know, but once again,

Thoughts long dead and buried,

Shook their wings, a sunny train,
And o'er my spirit wearied
Pour'd a fresh and childish song,
One I had forgotten long ;
Nay, not one, a flock, a throng.

Everlasting Now,
How wonderful art thou !
In a dingy, noisy street,
A pure white lilac growing,
Shower'd down odours to my feet,
And mingled with their flowing
Sounds and sights of long ago,
Roses which have ceased to blow,
Winters of forgotten snow.
Stranger faces passing by
I could see no longer ;
Visions of the inner eye

Ever are the stronger.
Came a face quite close to me,
One I here no longer see,
Smiled,—then vanish'd suddenly.

Everlasting Now,
How terrible art thou !
Wandering by the river's side
When the sun was setting,
Whispers came from far and wide,
"There is no forgetting—
Past is present, Now is vast,
What is Future will be Past,
All will be but Now at last !"
Then there shot a keen regret
For a harsh word spoken,
Glistening still with tear-drops wet,
Love's fair flowret broken ;
Years long past had seen that wrong,

But of bitter thoughts a throng
 Sprang to life, all fresh and strong !

Everlasting Now,
 How bitter-sweet art thou !
 Soul ! who never canst forget,
 Thou must live for ever !
 Eyes ! with tears of penance wet,
 Ye must wake for ever !
 Canst thou face the Eternal Now ?
 Or, as mortal things laid low,
 Dost thou crave an end ? Not so !
 Thou, who wakest memory's ear
 By such subtle blending
 Of the present and the near,
 With the life unending,—
 Tune us to that perfect key,
 Giving life its unity,
 Life, which hides itself in Thee !



I.

SUSPENSE.



ONG on the old oak stairs I stay'd,
Ere to his room I crept ;
The moonlight on the garden play'd,
But clouds hung darkly,—and afraid
I stood—I had not wept
The livelong day, though life of life might pass
before I slept.

The trees rock'd wildly to and fro
With every gust of wind,

And then, anon, it did not blow
But very gravely, sad and slow,
Like one of steadfast mind,
The cedar waved, and whisp'ring said, "Some
hope is yet behind."

And still I paused,—the wind went down,
All sound and motion died ;
And as I stood there all alone
My every hope seem'd dead and gone,
For certainty I cried,—
The deep suspense within me Nature answer'd
far and wide.

And then some gentler sounds were stirr'd,
The limes their blossoms drop,
Or gently moves some tiny bird ;
Then quicken'd sense through silence heard

A voice—"It soon will stop,
That precious life which is thy life, thy comfort,
and thy prop."

A shiver through the bushes pass'd,
A horror on me sat,
And clasp'd my heart, and held it fast,
Until I started, scared at last,—
For by me flew a bat,
And spake a word of ill, and left my heart
aghast thereat.

And then I stood beside his bed,
Perchance the bed of death;
All feeling from my pulses fled
But one, and these the words it said:
"How slowly comes his breath!
If he revives thou too shalt live, if not, what
followeth?"

II.

WATCHING.



EEP breathing silence fell,

Night closed her wings around

Without a sound,

How long I sat I cannot tell,

Nor what I thought, but 'tis as well

Thought has a bound.

Deep breathing silence spake,

And peopled all the air,

Eyes everywhere

Look'd searching, till my powers awake,

Did a grim form of horror take,

Of wild despair !

The fire was dying low,
And then to me was brought
A desperate thought,
“If that last spark shall cease to glow,
That other light shall also go,
And leave you nought!”

Upon my knees I fell,
And fann'd the dying flame,
It was the same,
While on me hung that nameless spell,
As if the life I loved too well
So went and came.

But then the morning broke !
Slow gathering from the East
The light increased,
The soft winds from their slumbers woke,
The new-born day of comfort spoke,
My dread had ceased !

I look'd upon his face,
It rested, calm and still,
That awful chill
Pass'd from me, with serene amaze ;
I saw the look of happier days ;
I had my will !

III.

GREETING.



THROUGH the garden gliding,
Pass'd I soft and slow,
Trees bent down confiding
Comforts they were hiding
Close all yesterday,
Now they let them flow,
These the words they say :

"See my petals spreading,"
Spake the blushing rose ;
"When your feet came treading
Here with fear and dreading,
Only yesterday,
How could I disclose
What I had to say ?"

"Sure it then were madness
When you came this way,
In your grief and sadness,
If I spake of gladness
Only yesterday ;
List the words I say,
Now be glad and gay !"

"See my fingers pointing,"
Spake the beech-tree glad ;

"Spread for their anointing,
Dews not disappointing
Touch them day by day;
I was parch'd and sad
Only yesterday."

"See my broad hands spreading,"
Spake the chestnut bold;
"Joy comes lightly treading;
Take I, without dreading,
Every new-born day,
All that I can hold,
Fear not joy, I say!"

Still that heavy sadness
Partly held my breath;
"Surely it were madness,
Did I grasp at gladness;

Only yesterday,
Bitterness of death
Dark upon me lay.

“ Yet when I was keeping
Vigils sad and drear,
Some had ceased their weeping,
Some were calmly sleeping ;
Every new-born day,
Nature—mother dear—
Words to each can say.

“ On each coming morrow,
For each mortal woe,
Be it dread or sorrow,
She some calm can borrow ;
Nature ! mother sweet !
See our burdens now
Laid at thy dear feet ! ”





WINTER LOVE SONG.



HITE and red ! white and red !

No varying colours brightly glow,

For all is clothed with pure white

snow,

All so daintily bespread ;

But only on rose-bush and tall holly-tree,

Through the soft, white vesture perchance you

may see

A red, shining berry thrust out its head.

Red and white ! red and white !

The cedar a pyramid all of snow,

Smooth footpath and turf cover'd up below,
Summer would be forgotten quite ;
But robin's red breast is against the red berries,
He pecks them, then sings of the ripe, red cherries
Coming next summer in winter's despite.

Red, white, and blue! red, white, and blue!
One colour more in the tender sky,
For the curtain of white clouds has floated by,
Unveiling that passionless hue ;
But when many-hued summer has come, this pale
sky
Will deepen with throbbing intensity,
Repeating my soul's love for you !





KNOWN BUT NAMELESS.



GAIN, O once again !

Oh let me hear thy footsteps light

Come tripping through the night,

And bringing in their train

Fancies all new, and bright, and fresh, and fair ;

Let wealth of colour'd sounds fill earth and air,

O nameless presence, give my soul delight !

Again oh ! once again !

Though earth be bathed in summer's glow

All is as winter's snow,

All beauty smiles in vain ;

The earth lies fallow, and the birds are mute,
Without thee no good seed bears pleasant fruit,
O nameless presence, make my joy to flow !

Once more—oh ! yet once more !

Though choicest friendship linger near ;

Yet, if thou be not here,

All dead that fruitful store

Of thoughts which kindle thought, and words
which burn :

Stretch forth thy wand, at once to fire they
turn.

O bounteous presence, yet once more appear !

Once more return—once more,

When weary on the couch of pain,

If thou dost smile again,

A flood of joy doth pour.

Though outward blessings all have fled away,
Though round me no rich sounds or colours play,
Smile, nameless one—thou canst not smile in
vain !

Thy name I do not know,
But those thou favourest all confess,
Though grief to them her bitterness
In deepest dyes doth show,
A whole still life, full of all common joys,
Spent without thee, can bear no equipoise
To that where joy is rare but thou dost bless !





THE CLIFF TOPS.

PART I.



ONE! ay, for ever gone far, far from
me,

The glories of that fair, unchequer'd
sky,

Which, as we wander'd, hung o'er land and sea,
My only love and I.

The earth lay basking on that summer day,

The sea heaved slowly its great thoughts of rest,
All spoke of peace, yet, looking back, I say
Not this to me was best!

Eastward I look'd o'er ocean's vast domain,

Westward o'er fold on fold of sunny land,—

All was delight, but most of all again

To clasp one small, soft hand.

To clasp one small, soft hand, and then to look

In sweet, calm depths of quiv'ring violet eyes ;

To read of perfect trust in that fair book,

With ever glad surprise.

We wander'd silent, but I spoke at last,

“Stop ! on this giddy point a moment stand ;

Let thine eyes wander o'er this empire vast,

Magnificently grand.

“Like to some world of great invisible power,

Not tied to matter, bounded by no line,

Where roams imagination hour by hour,

And is it not all mine ?”

“And yet if I were sad, or care oppress’d,
My little bird! or thou hadst flown away,
Methinks I should not seek my spirit’s rest
Here, as I do to-day.

“How bright thou lookest, and how glad and
free,
Thou timid one,—yet I have seen thee
shrink
From scenes less awful than th’ unbounded sea,
Seen from this giddy brink.”

“How should I fear,” she answer’d, “when you
stand
Close at my side, so that I cannot fall?
How should I tremble, when within your hand
Mine knows that it has all?”

"If I were sad or lonely, then the cry
Of these wild sea-birds, and their searching sweep,
As to and from the rocks they ceaseless fly,
Perchance might make me weep.

"Then I might fancy them in ceaseless quest
Of good for ever lost; and then the sound
Of these wild cries might say, 'Oh, give us rest!
Or woe that hath some bound!'

"Look at the distance! See you something dark?
A speck, perhaps a ship far out at sea;
No, turn! look westward; listen to that lark
Singing so merrily!"

Landward we turn'd, and over field and wold
We saw innumerable larks that rose
Upward and ever upward, glad and bold,
Then hush'd—and sought repose.

"How trustful," said she, "is their morning song;

I love it better than the sea-bird's cry ;

And yet how each to each must needs belong,

In perfect harmony."

"Most true," I answer'd ; "yet I love the sea,

Its wild, weird songsters, and untrodden space,

Better than solid land, and minstrelsy

Of joyful, gentle grace."

"Bold and adventurous," she said, "you love

To feel you are not fetter'd, bound, or tied ;

Your thoughts on strong sure wings can soar above,

Or wander far and wide.

"I only crave, like that glad lark, to rise,

Singing and soaring; but, when heart-oppress'd

By heaven's immensity, with sweet surprise

I find my solid rest."

"Sweet little home-bird ! fold thy soft brown wings,"

I, bantering, answer'd. " Look not on the sea,
Sleep in thy nest, and dream not of great things
Which do not trouble thee !"

Then, half reproachful, she caress'd my hand.

"I do not grudge," she said, " your vision wide,
Although I may not follow, while I stand
Close clinging to your side !"

" You would not," said I, " could I take you out
In darkness, till you heard the dreadful roar
Of waves that break upon a shore of doubt,
Incessant evermore !

" O what is real in this life of dreams ?

The sea, the sky, the rocks whereon we stand.
Art thou a phantom ? Is it as it seems,—
Is this indeed thy hand ?

“Or have I dream’d of perfect love so long
That now at last I think my dream is true;
My passionate heart has blossom’d into song:
A song which sings of you?”

“Sweet little home-bird! fetch my fancies home!
Only in thy sure love is perfect rest;
Sunshine has left the cliffs, so let us come
And seek our quiet nest!”

Sad questioning eyes, they traversed land and sea,
Then trustful mounted to the heaven above;
“One love is surer,” said her voice to me,
“And that is perfect love.”

PART II.

“UR quiet nest!—where does the great
round earth

Hold such a haven, that my soul may creep,
Forgetting bygone miseries and mirth,
And there for ever weep?”

Through the long vistas of a forest dark
I seemed to wander, having lost my way ;
And only here and there a gleam could mark
Beyond, where shines the day.

A summer's morning, on a point of land
I stood again, as one short year before,
With one beside me folding hand in hand,—
Now gone for evermore.

As in a cruel nightmare dream I stood,
Scarce knew what thoughts through my numb'd
soul did pass ;
Then anguish came upon me in a flood,—
I fell upon the grass.

Then all the world of sight grew undefined,
I only heard the sea-birds' desolate cry ;
Through the dry grass the whispering, shivering
wind
Drew closer—then swept by.

Far, far below, the booming, muffled sound
Of waves which beat with never-ceasing
shocks,
Gathering new strength for every fresh re-
bound
On those old, steadfast rocks.—



But, lo ! a clear, sweet singing calmly broke
Upon mine ears, until at last it crept
Into my soul ; drawn by the thoughts it woke,
Up from the grass I leapt.

Upwards I follow'd till my spirit drank
Those sounds, like audible colours, in the sky :
The song was finish'd,—then the singer sank
Silent,—all suddenly.

Then as I stood, a voice drew near to me,
Whose tones are only mine for evermore,
A voice which praised the lark's sweet minstrelsy
But one short year before.

Could it have been that when that sweet voice spake,
And that dear presence wander'd by my side,
A certain bliss uncertainty could wake,
Doubts spreading far and wide ?

Now all I knew for certainty was this,
That on this earth I nevermore should find
My being's better self, and higher bliss ;—
And I was left behind !

And I had follow'd sadly down the road
Which brought us nearer parting day by day ;
And then I could not drop my earthly load,
Though she had found the way.

And I must backward turn, and tread alone
My weary path, with footsteps sad, and slow :
All was unreal here since she was gone :
This only did I know,

That she who was so good, and fair, and bright,
Could never more be blotted out from space ;
But somewhere, though unseen by earthly sight,
Must hold her fitting place.



O comfort, growing stronger year by year,
 Making the false more false, the sure more sure!
O relic, left by deepest soul-despair,
 Showing what must endure !

O distant world whose shores have grown so
 clear
 That its calm colours earthly things imbue,
Making us see the present, and the near,
 As shadows of the True !





MESSAGES FROM THE COUNTRY
IN A TOWN GARDEN.

I.

WINTER.



IN the city garden, when all nature is
asleep,
And a fair, white, snowy vesture
lies on all things soft and deep ;
And I only know the places where flowers once
raised their heads
By a snowy billow,
A spotless, smooth pillow,

Which no mere earthly handling, howe'er tender,
ever spreads,—

I look from out my window, and dream how snow
doth lie

On mountain sides and moorland, while the keen
wind passes by.

The smoky walls are clean and fresh with newly-
fallen snow,

And each five-pointed ivy-leaf in faery white doth
show;

And I only know the place where we sat in
summer days

By white mounds concealing,

And yet half revealing

The seats beneath the trees where we hid from
the sun's rays.

I look from out my window, and dream how it
may be,
In lonely places which I know with snow on rock
and tree.

There comes a saucy tom-tit, and says a word
or so,
And robins, blackbirds, sparrows quest their food
amid the snow ;
And I only know the places where they used to
sit, and sing,
By snowy branches lying
Against the sky, defying
My memory to picture how green they were in
Spring.
I look from out my window, and the birds through
all the air
Tell how the snow in distant woods lies sprinkled
pure, and fair.



II.

SPRING.



THE Feast of Whitsuntide has come,
And ribës, clematis, and rose
Small rounded tender buds disclose ;
And all the churches yesterday
Bloom'd out in springtide colours gay,
For Whitsuntide has come.

I have not roam'd the flowery meads ;
But I can picture how they look,
Bluebells, and marigolds by the brook,
And the wealth of purple, and yellow flowers,
Which lavish, cheery springtide showers
About the gorgeous meads.

•

In my town garden comes to me,
Borne on the wings of old church bells,
A tale which of the springtide tells,
Of country people bearing posies,
Rockets, and wall-flowers, stocks, and roses,
Making the market gay.

And a message caws from overhead,
Saying, "In elm-trees far away
Rooks have made nests for many a day ;
Rich golden gorse bursts out at last,
Old hawthorn bushes whiten fast :"
So comes the glad old story.



III.

SUMMER.



OW scant the messages which fly
To city ears in summer days,
To tell of quiet, shady ways
In all their deepening greenery.

Only by contrasts can I learn
How June's gay flowers are fading now,
Whilst yet unlit is Autumn's glow,
When sunny sheaves will ripely burn.

The poor town trees of smoky green
Tell how the year is going fast;
Daisies of Michaelmas come at last,
And gladioli will soon be seen.

Fade Summer ! Now to Autumn yield,
Her whispers I perchance may hear ;
Alas ! in Summer, on my ear,
No message falls from moor or field !

IV.

AUTUMN.



OLDEN nasturtiums climbing up,
With long, wild wreaths o'er bush and
wall ;

One drop of rain in each bright cup,
Moist blades of grass where apples fall :
And everywhere a breathing deep,
Of quietness, and coming sleep.

Little birds chattering up above,—
No longer hidden in clouds of green,
As when in Spring they sang of love,—

Now through the branches plainly seen :
And everywhere a breathing deep,
Of quietness, and coming sleep.

Rooks floating lazily, lazily caw,
Telling that Summer is over, and gone ;
I feel as if Autumn's presence I saw,
Not in my poor city-garden alone :
And everywhere a breathing deep,
Of quietness, and coming sleep.

How comes this sense of brooding rest,
Through all the sounds from the city below ;
How comes it I feel how wild places are drest
In heather now browning, and ferns' orange-
glow :
And everywhere a breathing deep,
Of quietness, and coming sleep ?

Spring with her flutter of coming delight,
Summer's fruition of joy full-blown,
Bring but few tidings to hearing and sight ;
But Autumn herself broods over the town,
With everywhere a breathing deep,
Of quietness, and coming sleep.





MODULATIONS.

I.

CONFIDENCE.—ALLEGRO IN G.



OST thou know where blue-bells blow
Under the churchyard wall ?
We heard them one to another
call,

Pealing out odours far and wide,
On the soft west wind of the sweet springtide,
Shaking blue heads from side to side ;
Ringing, " All is safe and sweet,
Over your heads and under your feet."

Dost thou know where the waters flow

Under the churchyard wall ?

We saw the blue tints on them fall

From merry flowers upon the bank,

As now they leapt up, and now they sank,

Over the stones, with a tinkle and clank,

Singing, " All is safe and sweet,

Over your heads and under your feet."

II.

DOUBT.—LARGHETTO IN D sharp minor.



DOST thou know where shadows grow

Within the church's wall ?

As through the western windows fall

Streams of sunshine, golden-clear,

Touching arch, and tomb, and pier,

Whence shoots that agony of fear ?

Saying, " Where shall be thy trust,
When all earth shall burn to dust ? "

What, though I know calm waters flow
Without the churchyard wall,
And tender touches of sunshine fall
Upon the grave where thou dost lie,
Yet my soul in agony doth cry—
" All this shall vanish by and bye ;"
She crieth, trembling, " Into space
Earth shall pass, and leave no trace ! "

III.

TRUST.—ANDANTE CANTABILE IN D flat.



OST thou know where lilies blow

Within the churchyard wall ?

I heard their sad, sweet voices call—

“Heart! feelest thou the loving wreath
Around thee of our odorous breath?
One lies our tender roots beneath,
Let not death thy yearnings thrust,
Loving heart, down to the dust!”

Full well I know the waters flow
Without the churchyard wall,
And chimes of blue-bells merrily call
To the calm, blue heaven above my head.
Firm is the earth, whereon I tread,
And thou art safe in thy lonesome bed;
Christ knoweth well where thou art laid,
And wherefore should I be afraid?





THE STORM.

I.



SLIDING darkly through the trees

Goeth one ;

Seeking rest, and craving ease,

Findeth none ;

So rock the trees, and lift their heads on high,

As struggling up for comfort to the sky.

Grief, which seem'd all lull'd to rest,

Gives a start,

Shakes its head, and rears its crest,

Points its dart !

Points its sure dart, and haven there is none
To shelter this poor soul, all naked and alone.

Tempest wars with fiercer power,
Strife, and din ;
Powers of darkness have their hour
Deep within ;
O buried love, why risest thou again ?
O hidden woe, why ragest thou in vain ?

II.

THE LULL.



VEN storms must seek their rest,
Fury past ;
Even grief must sink to rest,
Tired at last ;

Not blackest clouds can ceaseless fury pour,
The largest heart can hold so much—no more.

Sinking down beneath the trees,
Falleth one ;
Comes a lull, not rest nor ease,
Pause alone ;
Rock the trees with fitful moan and start,
Trembles, then is still the weary heart.

Sobbing, sighing, sinks the wind,
Sobs and stops ;
And the rain which stays behind,
Gentler drops ;
Wearied one now sinking on the ground,
Sobs, then sighs, then rests without a sound.

III.

THE AWAKING.



RISE again, glad summer sun !

Bright and fair ;

Sing, O birds, the night is done,

Blow, sweet air ;

Smile gladly, flowers, and lift your little heads,

Wave gently, trees, and fan the garden beds.

Rise again, O wearied one,

Wake and rise !

Night is vanish'd, storms are gone,

Ope thine eyes !

Some tender trace there is of darker hours,

A little wearied hang the leaves and flowers.

Fruitful now and passing sweet

Is all around !

Richly do the senses greet

Sight, scent, and sound !

More fruitful, too, for storm and rain art thou,

Which rent thy wearied heart, and laid thee low !





CANTERBURY THORNS.

No. I.—LOST.

PART I.—THE BLOSSOM.



HE sweet springtide came early,

The purple bloom had fled,

Which over every wood and brake

A tender hint had spread

Of the vesture green which would yet be seen

Where all had seem'd so dead.

The apples soon would blossom,

The primrose would be seen

Among the fresh, young nettle-leaves,
And, folded in darker green,
The welcome sight of the violet white ;
For all shall be that has been.

But one gift came that springtide,
Oh, comes it nevermore ?
A foot upon the garden path,
A hand on the latch of the door,
Whose touch I knew, and deem'd it true,
Though unknown a spring before.

We stood folded in the twilight,
And closed the door behind,
And his last, soft words were utter'd,
And caught, and caress'd by the wind ;
The morrow was ours, in sunshine or showers,
And to us it must be kind !

He said, "See the thorn, my darling,
 Grasping the wall so fast;
 So clings my strong, young life to thee
 With love that ne'er was surpass'd;
 When red berries grow where blossoms are now
 You shall be mine at last!"

PART II.—THE BERRY.



ARK, chill November!
 Fast closing far and wide,
 Swift creeping up the side
 Of that steep hill once clad in light,
 The fog came masquerading night.

Bright, rich, and glowing,
 A shock of harsh surprise
 Struck on my sad, dim eyes,

As wondrous 'mid the encircling gloom
As life upspringing from the tomb.

O Canterbury Thorn !
He said ere time had spread
Thy vesture rich and red,
And clothed about our old stone door,
I should be his for evermore.

Fair were his words to me,
And sweet was young love's spring,
Bitter the harvesting !
Bright on the wall the berries glow,
But in my heart is dreary snow !

Speak not to me in spring,
With thy white, starry flowers,
Nor in dark autumn hours
Flaunt thy ripe glories in my face ;
No more ! I tear thee from thy place !



CANTERBURY THORNS.

No. II.—NOT LOST.

PART I.—THE BLOSSOM.



THE rooks were clamouring in the elms,
And everywhere was seen
That purple bloom which seems to be
A modulation of the key
From nature's brown to green.

The rooks were chattering of their nests,
And everywhere was heard
The sound of spring's awakening,
Which gave a voice to everything
At last—through hope deferr'd.

The rooks were busy to and fro,
And undeveloped life
Made sweet, yet grave, that springtide morn,
He said, "The Canterbury Thorn
With bursting buds is rife."

The rooks repeated all his words,
He said, "Before the day
When berries red shall cluster here,
You shall be mine, my love, my dear,
You shall be mine for aye!"

PART II.—THE BERRY.



WEETLY moved the summer time

Calmly to its stiller prime;
Nature paused with breathings deep
Of perfectness to take her fill,

Ere decay began to creep
With golden footsteps up the hill.

Silenter the little birds,
Scantier our utter'd words ;
We too paused, nor look'd before,
But claim'd our bliss each morrow morn,
Till round about the ancient door
Red glow'd the Canterbury Thorn.

Autumn stole o'er hill and tree,
Gently came my grief to me ;
On that face, too, passing dear,
Glow'd a light of heavenly birth ;
Ere came winter cold and drear,
He had vanish'd from the earth.

Glowing still beside the door,

Thorn, grow on for evermore !

Of a resurrection morn

Speak thy starry flowers in spring,

With thy glowing garb are born

Dreams of heaven's awakening !





FRIEND DOUBT.



GARDEN by the sea—

Abandoned to the solemn power

Of autumn—from the trees a shower

Fell thick incessantly.

Summer had been, and gone ;

When here she spread with lavish hand

Rich, stintless gifts o'er all the land,

Of every tint and tone.

Autumn with artist's skill

Seized on red apples, and the leaves

Which the Virginian-creeper weaves
Round door and window-sill,

Marking sharp points of light;
Not scattering glories everywhere,
But midst grey colouring here and there
Setting a focus bright.

And yet I stood forlorn,
The calm, sweet beauty spoke in vain,
Striking a keen, deep thrill of pain
Of harshest discord born.

Within was tumult sore,
A brief, wild life of joy had past,
Leaving my heart like something cast
Helpless upon the shore.



The garden was too still,
Although the sea below my feet,
In gurgling notes and measures sweet,
Roll'd echoes up the hill.

Opening the garden door
And passing outwards, swift I went
With eager steps, my purpose bent
To reach the open moor.

Yearning and sad I stood.
Oppressive was the still, grey heaven,
The deepening golds and purples given
To twilight's sobering mood.

Gone was that long, sad day !
Night on thick mists came riding fast
Up the deep gorges, till at last
It hid my homeward way.

And I my path must fight
Now through the sinking moss, and now
Through tangled heather, till below
I saw a cottage light.

Then I took heart again,
And fought my way to where the light—
As if for my sole use that night—
Shone through the window-pane.

Swiftly, as I drew near,
Came forth an old dame, holding high
A light, as if she would descry
Whose voice was calling her.

Hers was a calm, old face,
And yet, behind that placid mien
The eyes seem'd looking, wondering, keen,
To some far distant place.

“ Ah ! you have lost your way ? ”

She said ; “ there’s many see my light,
Who, but for that, would roam all night
Until the break of day.

“ My eyes are growing dim,
But in the window of his home
A light shall burn until he come,—
It is for him ! for him ! ”

“ Alone do you dwell here ? ”
I asked ; “ and when the nights are dreary,
And winds are howling, do you weary
To know that one is near ? ”

“ There’s my good man,” said she,
“ And my two lads, but they are gone
O’er the blue waters, but anon
They will return to me !

“’Tis not for them I burn
The light o’ nights in the window-pane ;
They always do come back again,
I know they will return.

“But that young lad, alack !
Who sail’d on one bright summer day,
And kiss’d me ere he went away,
Why does he ne’er come back ?

“And yet when they are gone,
The others—and the heavy clouds
Roll up the moors like dead men’s shrouds,
Then I am not alone.

“The neighbours say to me—
(I know ’tis false,)—that he is dead ;
For oft he comes and lays his head
Upon his mother’s knee.

" I often see his face !

I say each morn, ' Perchance in vain

To-day my eyes I shall not strain

Far into empty space.'

" Love sees where senses fail !

And so I nothing wish to know

From others' lips. Shall I not go

To him within the veil ?

" I shrink from certainty :

For being mine so many years—

Now in calm silence, once through tears—

Doubt is a friend to me !"

And having said her say,

She took a lantern, and again

Placing the light in the window-pane,

She led me on my way.

She took me to my door,
And as we parted there I said,
“ God can give solace, though our dead
Return in flesh no more.

“ I would that I could learn,
Like you, in quietness to stay
My heart, e'en as your lantern's ray
Through the dark hours doth burn.”

“ Ay !” said she, “ not too soon
Expect that peace : my eyes grew dim
With weary straining after him
Ere bitterness was gone !

“ But now He knoweth best
Both how to comfort and to grieve
Our passionate hearts ; and so I leave
My lad to Him in rest !”

So did our converse cease :
And on the shore in low, dull throbs,
Monotonous waves, like after-sobs,
Spoke words of coming peace.





TO A FRIEND.



SAY not that our lives were all
apart;

A book fast closed, which we can
never read

One to the other. We are never freed
From the dear past by circumstance or art.
And though our lives' beginnings took their start
Not side by side; and though those early years,
Hid in the mist of sunshine and of tears,
Seem far away,—yet know I in my heart
That all the day I have been growing meet

For thy dear love. And had our footpaths cross'd
Sooner, perhaps the bond had been less sweet,
And of its perfectness had somewhat lost.
For He who knows beginning, way, and end,
Chose best the time when I should call thee
Friend!





BEFORE CHRISTMAS.



FELT thy presence near me as I
stood

Within the church, and twined the
Christmas wreath :

I felt thy presence near me, not in death,
But still in life ! What gloomy spirit could
Be wholly sad, when from the bounteous wood
Are gather'd holly, yew, and mistletoe,
All fresh and vigorous 'neath harsh winter's snow,
Telling of One who maketh all things good ?
Even to those whom Christmas finds forlorn,
When to the dying Feast they shall draw near

Of our dear Lord upon His birthday-morn,
In joy or sorrow must His love appear ;
His life all gather'd up in one brief story,
Our Brother here on earth, our King in glory.





NEW YEAR'S EVE.



ALL softly, snow, and cover the dark
earth,

Cover all silently, this New Year's

Eve,

The memories of this passing year, and leave
All its sharp forms of sorrow and of mirth
Shrouded in kindness. Then, as on the worth
Of parted friends we ponder when they're gone,
So will I sit and think of thee alone !
Not change nor loss alone : but the new birth,
Have in thy rolling seasons come to me,

Of thoughts, affections, blessings which will grow,
As when the lower branches of a tree
Fall off, the topmost shoots fresh vigour show,
And upwards ever, fresh new leaves unfold,
Which summer suns shall crown with purest gold!





HIS FOOTSTEPS.

PART I.



IM, indistinct, far, far away,

Seem the grey hills of Palestine,

Where One went out ere break of day,

To be alone, to watch, and pray :

Nor near, that scene, at day's decline,

When for his aid the sick appeal'd,

And all were comforted and heal'd.

Is it still nigh—that love divine ?

So ask'd my heart, as down a street

My course had led in bright mid-day,

Where some creep by on weary feet,
And some with joy their fellows greet,
 In sorrow's path or pleasure's way :
One-half the world seem'd fair and glad,
The other travel-worn and sad,
 And He so very far away !

But through the turmoil one low sound
 Came to my heart appealingly ;
It said, " Is there no moment found
To pause amid this busy round,
 And kneel within the church hard by ?"
I enter'd by the western door,
And heard without the muffled roar,
 And sigh'd, " O, that He were but nigh !"

Yet daily in that holy place,
 And the low bell which calls to prayer,



Are memories time can ne'er efface,
Like footprints where His steps we trace,
And day by day we find Him there !
So did that strange and far-off life
Draw near me in the present's strife,—
Yes, He was there—for He is here !

PART II.

NOR only in the busy throng
Of work and pleasure, joy and pain;
But as I sometimes walk'd along,
And heard the cheery cuckoo's song
In some deep-furrow'd, leafy lane,
The doubting thought has make me quail,—
“Was it a vision or a tale
Which I have heard, and heard again ?

"This working world of busy men,
Who live as if they could not die,
Nor fear them what shall follow then
In other worlds beyond their ken,
But go their ways unwittingly:
Can things in very deed be true
Which they put by—while I and you
And all forget He is so nigh?"

So musing once we look'd below
Upon a little village set
Among the hills; the evening glow,
Lingering late, was fading now,
But human life was stirring yet;
A life, perchance, as far apart
As that which throbs the great world's heart
From the One Life we all forget!

Through the still air a shiver past;

There stood a lonely aspen-tree,

In the calm hour or stormy blast,

Aye shivering.—In the simpler past

Men doubted not that this must be

The tree whereof the Cross was made,

Which ever shakes as if afraid,

So even here His steps we see!

We find His footsteps not alone

Where men have sought His faith to keep,

But lonely set 'mid gorse and stone;

The aspen-tree with ceaseless moan

Speaks of the love which cannot sleep!

What other life has ever set

Its steps that no man should forget,

O'er the whole world in traces deep?

Yes!—now though down the ages far

We've left that life in Palestine,
Till dimly shines our Bethlehem star,
And this near life seems all ajar

With that great, simple life of Thine ;—
Through its low aims, its strife, its pain,
He struggles upward, not in vain,
Who knows Thee nigh, O Love Divine !





A LIGHT SHINING IN A DARK PLACE.



AND thou to other worlds art gone,
Beyond my sight, beyond my ken :
I walk amongst my fellow-men,
And they, too, vanish one by one,
And here we look for them again,
In vain ! oh, all in vain !

Thou for thy going didst prepare,
As one who all the journey knows,
Nor doubts the place to which he goes
More than if he had once been there.

But what does any mortal know
Of that land where we go ?

We know so little !—this is why
It lifts our poor hearts from the dust,
To see one wait with perfect trust,
To leave us and, as we say, die !
It helps us when our senses fail,
And poor, weak spirits quail.

Sometimes, when all seems slipping fast
Beneath our feet, before our eyes,
We doubt if all things be but lies,—
A vision, present, future, past ;
We seek some place within, without,
Free from this weary doubt.



Then, as the clouds which all the sky
Have cover'd o'er, at sunset lift ;
We see through one long, solemn rift
The pale green sky's calm purity :
So through the darkness comes a hand
To stay us as we stand.

And there is light enough to cast
A little circle round our feet ;
And more, a light our eyes doth greet
From lands we hope to reach at last,
From hills which in the sunshine lie,
Cloudless eternally.

How could the eyes of mortals bear,
If from those distant worlds the veil
Were drawn aside ? Our hearts would fail
To live as we must needs live here ;

We could not walk as heretofore
Upon our earthly shore.

But this remains a wondrous thing,—
That though we doubt of worlds unknown
Till e'en of this world doubts have grown
Which rive our hearts with wondering,
Some certainties do yet remain
Not to be lost again :

That One our eyes have never known
Upon this very earth did tread,
Here lived and died, and from the dead
Ascended whence He first came down ;
Our King as He was King before,
Our Brother evermore.

And He who was our Brother here,
Though He of all the worlds is King,
Doth not deny us in this thing,
But what would fill our hearts with fear ;
And when this mortal life is past,
Will show us all at last !





LIGHT.

"From all blindness of heart,

Good Lord, deliver us!"



HAT which I see not teach Thou me!"

Not as the early dawn,

With silent footsteps swift and

sure,

With sweetest sounds and breathings pure,

Stealing o'er mountain top to wood and lawn ;

Not so, most often, comes that teaching deep

With gentle touch, enlightening tenderly,

With rays not blinding eyes just waked from

sleep !

Yet, "What I see not teach Thou me!"

Not as the sun at last

Touches the spotted foxglove bells,

Lights dainty ferns in deep green dells,

When clouds have pour'd and pass'd,

And deep recesses open to the sight,

With no harsh touch, but gently, tenderly;—

Not so comes knowledge of most stirring
might.

But with dark mutterings and shocks,

With flashes in the night,

When silence may be felt around,

Save when there comes the rushing sound

Of winds that rise with fitful might,

And rock the trees, and lift the waves on high,

Which beat with impotence the solid rocks,

And no fair moon is shining in the sky.

Who then can supplicate this lore ?

To come when all is dark,

And eyes are dim with blinding tears,

And hearts are sick with half-known fears ;

Then suddenly a light to mark,

Which forces us to follow where it goes,

And lights up chambers never seen before,

And where we thought were friends unmasks

our foes.

But where that light once finds its way,

Though it may fade and pale,

Still it can never wholly die ;

For, burnt into the memory,

Its traces nevermore can fail ;

More precious than all teaching is that lore,

Which shows us what must last and what decay ;

Though scarce enduring we crave for more.



So, "What I see not teach Thou me!"

O Thou the only wise!

Who only seest our utter need,

By Whom alone our souls are freed

From ignorance and darkness, clear our eyes,

When and howe'er Thou seest best, if so

It please Thee, teach us gently, tenderly;

But teach us—Thou the wisest way dost

know!





AMID DISTRACTIONS.



UFFER us not, good Lord! to fall
away

Through any bitter pains of death
from Thee!—

So do men pray, when in the grave they see
Some dear form hidden from the light of day,
Once their dear comfort, or their strength and
stay;

And in their hearts still vibrates, it may be,
Some groan of suffering, or death-agony,
They deem will be their warning voice away.



But in the hurry of our daily life,
When thought pursues swift thought, as wave
 on wave
Climbs up the shore :—amid this ceaseless strife,
Whether of joys or sorrows, Good Lord ! save
Our hearts from falling from Thee, till there
 seems
No sober waking in this land of dreams !





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